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ABSTRACT

This issue of the quarterly newsletter "Rural Exchange" provides information and resources on accessible rural housing for the disabled. "Accessible Manufactured Housing Could Increase Rural Home Supply" (Nick Baker) suggests that incorporation of access features such as lever door handles and no-step entries into manufactured housing could help to meet the growing demand for accessible housing in rural areas. Difficulties to be overcome include zoning restrictions, lending policies of local banks, and ignorance of local manufactured housing dealers. A four-page fact sheet on accessible rural housing contains a statement of the problem; a sample design of an accessible three-bedroom house; and a list of resources for advocacy, design information, remodeling techniques, products and building materials, and educational opportunities for building industry professionals. "The HAMMER Project: A Partnership That Creates Accessible Housing" (Duane French, Bill Crandall) describes a project in Fairbanks (Alaska) that provides affordable accessibility modifications to private homes though a partnership among the local carpenters' union, Access Alaska, Easter Seals, and private businesses. Short features describe AgrAbility, a federal program that enables disabled farmers and ranchers to continue living on their land; discuss a Montana information network for people with disabilities; note that housing information is available at local libraries; and recommend a 57-page book "Building a Ramp," by John Henson. (SV)

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Rural Exchange

Montana University Affiliated
RURAL INSTITUTE on Disabilities

"Addressing the diversity of rural life."

The University of Montana | Volume 8, Number 1 | 1995

Accessible manufactured housing could increase rural home supply

by Nick Baker

When a manufactured home rolls off the assembly line, chances are three to one that it will come to rest in a rural area. If those homes were accessible, they would significantly increase the number of accessible housing units in rural America. That's important, because as people with disabilities become increasingly independent, the demand for affordable, accessible rural housing is growing--but the supply of suitable homes has not kept pace with the demand.

Local efforts (See story on the Hammer Project, p. 5) to make existing rural homes accessible, and architectural standards like "universal design" that make access features like lever door handles, no-step entries, wide doorways, and electrical outlets at reachable heights "standard equipment" in new construction are gradually increasing the rural stock of accessible homes. But zoning restrictions and lending policies are slow to change, and they present obstacles to building or buying homes with "unusual" features.

Because zoning and lending policies are locally determined, success in making accessible housing acceptable to zoning boards and lending institutions may not extend county-wide or even beyond town limits. A powerful, nationwide supporter of zoning and lending policies friendly to accessible design would speed those changes--and advocates think they may have found one.

The factory-built housing industry--which now produces good quality homes--suffers from the shoddy quality of some of its early efforts. The

See "Homes," p. 4

Common Threads '95: Working Together

Missoula, Montana

This year's conference--planned for September--focuses on **rural employment** and the **community support systems** that enable people with disabilities to work. For more information, contact Alexandra Enders at the Rural Institute.

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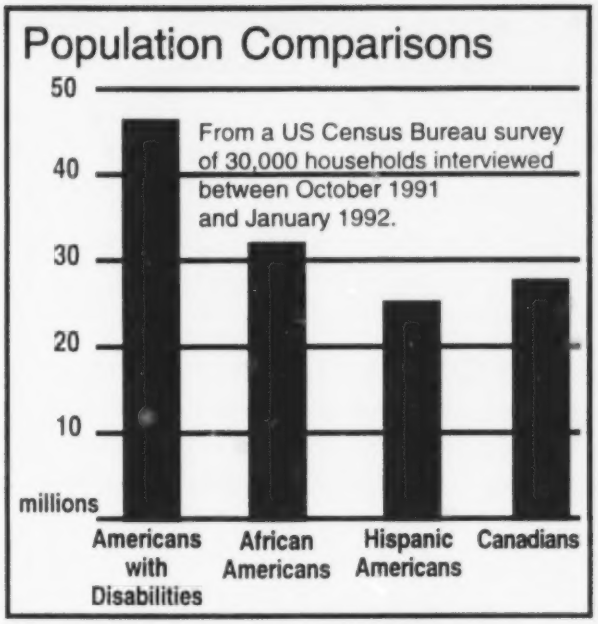

Census: 48.9 million in US have disabilities

People with disabilities are now one of this country's largest minority groups. According to the US Census Bureau, there are more US residents with disabilities than the US populations of African Americans or Hispanic Americans. In fact, the number of US residents with disabilites is nearly twice the entire population of Canada.

The 48.9 million US residents with disabilities comprise 19.4 percent of the US population--and those figures do not include people with disabilities who live in nursing homes!

Database describes unusual disorders

Easily undestood information on a thousand rare (and some not-so-rare) diseases and conditions is available in a database maintained by the National Organization for Rare Disorders.

The database enables NORD to fill 50 to 100 requests for information daily on disorders ranging alphabetically from ACTH Deficiency to Zollinger-Ellison Syndrome. In between, there are rarities like Vogt-Kovanagi-Harada Syndrome, Niemann-Pick Disease, Olivopontocorobellar Atrophy and Leprechaunism mixed with more familiar names like Legionaires Disease, Cerebral Palsy, Mumps, Osteoporosis and Stroke.

Each entry lists the disease name, synonyms, a general description of the disorder, symptoms, causes, affected populations, standard treatments, investigational treatments (when applicable), and a list of contacts for additional information.

NORD will mail reports for $4 per copy after the first two, which are free. For a list of available information and an order form, call NORD at (203) 746-6518 or write them: NORD, Box 8923, Fairfield, CT 06812-8923.

You can access the database directly via Compuserve (type "GO NORD").

AgrAbility needs support

The AgrAbility program, which has enabled thousands of families to continue living on their farms and ranches after experiencing life-changing disabilities, is itself in danger of becoming a casualty of the current round of federal budget-cuts.

AgrAbility keeps injured farmers and ranchers living and working productively on their land by providing low-cost, low-tech ideas, tips and tools that enable them to overcome disability-related barriers.

A partnership between the Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service, the National Easter Seal Society and the Breaking New Ground Resource Center, AgrAbility's enabling legislation is unusual for disability policy: it is not housed in a health or education package, but is included in the Farm Bill. In the bill's current form, funding is capped and many of the 19 states that now (Jan. 1995) have AgrAbility projects will lose

Inside the Institute

A Montana information network

Duane Gimbel, outreach coordinator for the Rural Institute's MonTECH Program (Montana's Tech Act agency), has inspired a cooperative effort among 21 independent information and referral (I&R) services to provide consistent information state-wide that's useful to people with disabilities throughout Montana.

Gimbel started the network by providing the state's independent living centers with a basic directory of Montana services, technical assistance, and the TRACE Center's "CO-NET" CD-ROM (containing a Cooperative Service Directory, which finds the nearest available requested services for callers via their ZIP codes and other useful databases). In return, the ILs updated the directory with new information about available services in their areas.

Next, Gimbel made the databases available to Montana's aging network--again in return for keeping the information up-to-date--and agreements are pending with 13 additional service providers.

Entries in the databases needn't be traditional disability services. Welders (who can fabricate and repair assistive devices), carpenters (who build ramps), and bicycle mechanics (who fix wheelchairs) are a few of the mainstream businesses in the directory, and more are added with each update.

"With everyone helping to keep resources updated," Gimbel says, "no single organization has to follow up with every database entry. And the resources don't have each I&R contacting them to keep individual databases current. Most importantly, callers from around the state are receiving accurate information in a consistent format.

For more information, contact Gimbel at the Rural Institue or the Trace Research and Development Center U of W-Madison 5-151 Waisman Center 1500 Highland Ave., Madison, WI 53705 608-262-6966.

them in March. If AgrAbility is not included in the new Farm Bill, there won't be *any* AgrAbility funding.

If you'd like to see continued support for this productive program that helps farmers with disabilities, their families and their rural communities, write or phone your representatives and senators. While you're at it, why not ask them to *increase* the program's funding so that more states and more individuals can benefit?

For more information or a list of states with AgrAbility programs, contact: Breaking New Ground Resource Center, Purdue University, 1146 Dept. of Agricultural Engineering, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1146. Voice/TT: 317-494-5088. FAX: 317-496-1115. Toll-free:1-800-825-4264.

The Rural Exchange

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Rural Exchange Editor .....Nick Baker

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"Homes," from p.1

poorly built "trailer houses" and mobile homes (the industry bristles at these terms and now refers to its products as "manufactured housing") of the past have caused lenders and taxing authorities to classify them as personal property rather than real property--a distinction that makes loan terms shorter, interest rates higher, and tax regulations more stringent. Similarly, zoning boards have regarded manufactured housing as undesirable and restricted it in many areas.

Rural Institute researcher Brad Bernier sees the similar status of manufactured and accessible housing--each having zoning and financing difficulties--as an opportunity for a powerful alliance: disability advocates could be willing to support zoning changes that would allow manufactured housing, if the industry would adopt accessible design standards. Manufacturers--who have already moved to a vertical integration strategy that puts them in control of financial institutions and manufactured housing communities in suburban and rural areas--would benefit from the growing market for accessible homes. Bernier has produced three reports on accessible manufactured housing that separately address the interests and needs of consumers, manufacturers, and lenders and zoning departments.

The good news is that some manufacturers now offer accessible features as a standard product. Excel Homes has developed a complete line of homes that incorporate universal design features, and others, like Destiny Mobile Homes, will modify their standard designs to buyers' specifications. The accessible homes are no more expensive than other units of similar quality. In fact, modifications that make rooms larger by eliminating walls can *reduce* costs. And manufacturers have found that wider doorways and halls, larger bathrooms, and other design changes that improve access appeal to the general public, who see the homes as spacious and elegant rather than "handicapped accessible." The bottom line is that, on average, manufactured housing costs 30 percent less than equivalent site-built homes.

But Bernier has found that the industry's enthusiasm for this new market doesn't necessarily extend to manufactured housing retailers, who are often a buyer's first and only resource for manufactured housing information. "Dealers usually arrange delivery and setup of the units," Bernier says, "and while they'll provide stairs, if they're needed, the ones I talked to don't build ramps. And while they're willing to order special features, when you say 'access' they don't know what you're talking about."

If a home that is already manufactured needs modifications to make it accessible, Bernier says, "Dealers won't do it. Someone who needs modifications is on their own," and he found that most after-sale remodeling, especially in rural areas, is done by family and friends.

Manufactured housing is a promising option for affordable, accessible rural housing--but it requires buyers to be assertive about their needs and knowledgeable about the available options. Many people don't feel the ambiance of manufactured housing matches their lifestyle. That includes Bernier, who says that his research on rural housing led him to a building technique he's interested in pursuing: straw bale construction. "It's even less expensive than manufactured housing," he says, "and it's completely flexible. You can build any size or shape house you want. I guess the point is, manufactured homes are just one of many available options. Spend some time deciding what you really want."

Brad Bernier's reports on manufactured housing will be available from the Rural Institute in Spring of 1995. For additional housing resources, see the Fact Sheet in the center of this issue of the Rural Exchange.

Accessible Rural Housing

As people with disabilities become increasingly independent, the demand for affordable, accessible rural housing is growing--but the supply of suitable homes has not kept pace with the demand.

Local efforts in rural areas to build new accessible housing or make existing homes accessible, and architectural standards like "universal design" that make access features--lever door handles, no-step entries, wide doorways, and electrical outlets at reachable heights, for example--"standard equipment" in new construction are gradually increasing the rural stock of accessible homes. But zoning restrictions and lending policies are slow to change, and they present obstacles to building or financing homes with "unusual" features.

Because zoning and lending policies are locally determined, success in making accessible housing acceptable to zoning boards and lending institutions may not extend county-wide, beyond town limits or even into the next block.

But even when zoning and financing are not a challenge, accessible home seekers will find that architects and designers are not always aware of--or interested in--design elements critical to creating an accessible dwelling. Builders often don't understand that seemingly minor changes in the design of an accessible home (narrowing doorways, for example, or increasing the grade of a ramp, or replacing a ramp with a step) can make a home uninhabitable for a person with a disability.

On the following pages of this fact sheet you'll find resources that can help develop accessible homes through advocacy, design information, remodeling techniques, product and trade resources, and educational opportunities for building industry professionals.

Produced by the Research and Training Center on Rural Rehabilitation with US Department of Education's National Institute on Rehabilitation Research grant #H133B20002-94.

Montana University Affiliated Rural Institute on Disabilities, 52 Corbin, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812
406/243-5467 Voice/TTY • 406/243-2349 FAX • 800/732-0323

Housing Resources

Disability Resources

Access Group
1776 Peachtree Road NW
Suite 208N
Atlanta, GA, 30309
404-514-7454
Contact them for: accessible housing ideas and information.
Publications include: "How to Modify a Trailer for Accessibility," $10.

Adaptive Environments Center
374 Congress St.
Suite 301
Boston, MA 02110
617-695-1225
Contact them for: home access solutions, design consultation.
Publications include: "A Consumers Guide to Home Adaptation," $12; "A Comprehensive Approach to Retrofitting Homes for a Lifetime," $10.

Two of the best resources for accessible building design and information--both developed by universal design pioneer Ron Mace--have merged. **Barrier-Free Environments** (which focuses on access in public and commercial buildings) and the **Center for Accessible Housing** (which focuses on home access) are now part of the:

Center for Universal Design
North Carolina State Univ.
Box 8613
Raleigh, NC 27695-8613
915-515-3082
800-647-6777
Publications include: 19 p. annotated bibliography, $5; "Financing Home Accessibility Modifications," $20; Tech Pack on Grab Bars, $3.

Concrete Change
1371 Metropolitan Ave. SE
Atlanta, GA 30316
404-378-7455
Contact them for: Advocacy perspectives, information on creating accessible neighborhoods, accessible renovation and new construction information, housing-related education and effective housing programs.

Gateway Resources

These national organizations provide information and publications, and can direct you to other housing resources specific to your needs.

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
Executive Offices:
601 E. St. NW
Washington, DC 20049
To order materials:
AARP Fulfillment
PO Box 2240
Long Beach, CA
Contact them for: services or information that relates to retirement or aging.
Publications include: "The Do●Able Renewable Home: Making Your Home Fit Your Needs," publication #470, single copies are free.

Architecture and Barrier-free Design Program
Paralyzed Veterans of America
801 18th St., NW
Washington DC 20006
202-416-7642
Contact them for: disability-related advocacy, services, information.
Publications include: "Making Your Home Accessible," free.

Breaking New Ground Resource Center
Purdue University
1146 Agricultural Engineering Building
West LaFayette, IN, 47907-1146
317-494-5088 (Voice/TTY)
800-825-4264
Contact them for: information on their "AgrAbility" program, which offers resources, ideas and programs that enable people with physical disabilities to live or continue living in rural settings.
Publications include: "Improving Farmstead Accessibility," $30; newsletter, "Breaking New Ground;" "Plowshares," tech notes (#19 is "Making Your Farmhouse Accessible").

Montana University Affiliated Rural Institute on Disabilities, 52 Corbin, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812
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HUD User
PO Box 6091
Rockville, MD, 20850
800-245-2691
Contact them for: Information on housing programs, lists of available HUD homes.
Publications include: "Mobile Homes, Alternative Housing for the Handicapped," HUD-000059, $10 + $3.50 S&H.

National Association of Home Builders
NAHB Research Center
Publication Department
400 Prince Georges Blvd
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
301-249-4000
Contact them for: "Special Needs Remodeling Program" (accessibility education for builders), other housing info.
Publications include: "National Directory of Home Modifications/Repair Programs," $8.

National Eldercare Institute on Housing and Supportive Services
Andrus Gerontology Center
University of So. California
University Park, MC-0191
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0191
213-740-1364
Publications include: "Making your Home Fit your Needs," "Creative Ideas for a Safe and Livable Home", free.

National Rehab. Info. Center
8455 Colesville Rd., Ste. 935
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Contact them for: Mfr. lists, fact sheets on lifts, ramps, etc.
800-346-2742

Local Resources

Independent Living Centers
Your local ILC should be able to steer you to local resources. Two rural ILCs that provide excellent resources are:

Access Alaska
3550 Airport Way, Suite 3
Fairbanks, AK 99709
907-479-7940
(Access retrofit program)

Disabled Citizens Alliance for Independence
P.O. Box 675
Viburnum, MO 65566
314-244-3315
(Rural housing ideas)

Cooperative Extension Service
This federal/county partnership provides agriculture-related information of all kinds. Listed as "Extension Service" under county government in phone books and usually housed in county office buildings, they may also provide local access to Breaking New Ground's "AgrAbility" program.

Vocational Education, trade schools and trade unions that offer training in the construction trades are good resources for technical information on construction and help in solving building access problems. They can also be a source of trained and/or certified construction workers.

Habitat for Humanity
121 Habitat St.
Americus, GA 31709-3498
Habitat's local offices coordinate building and housing rehab projects to provide low income housing--including accessible housing for people with disabilities.
800-HABITAT

Building supply centers and hardware stores can provide more than building materials and access-related specialty products. Their stock of mainstream tools, gadgets, appliances and accessories is a not only source of useful hardware but also an inspiration for creative ways to overcome a variety of disability-related obstacles.

Department, drug, chain and variety stores--Shopko, Best Products, Target and others have begun routinely selling safety grab bars, tub rails, toilet accessories, shower chairs and other items for making homes accessible. Many of these products are available through mainstream mail order retail outlets as well.

High-tech retailers like Radio Shack, stereo shops, phone company stores and The Sharper Image offer remote control systems, telephones, intercoms, video, audio and other electronics that can be used to improve home access.

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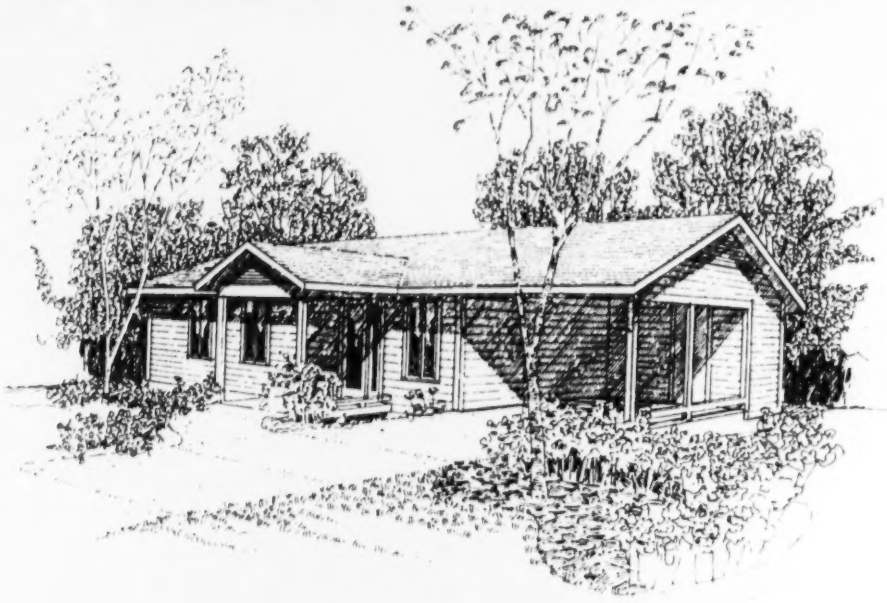

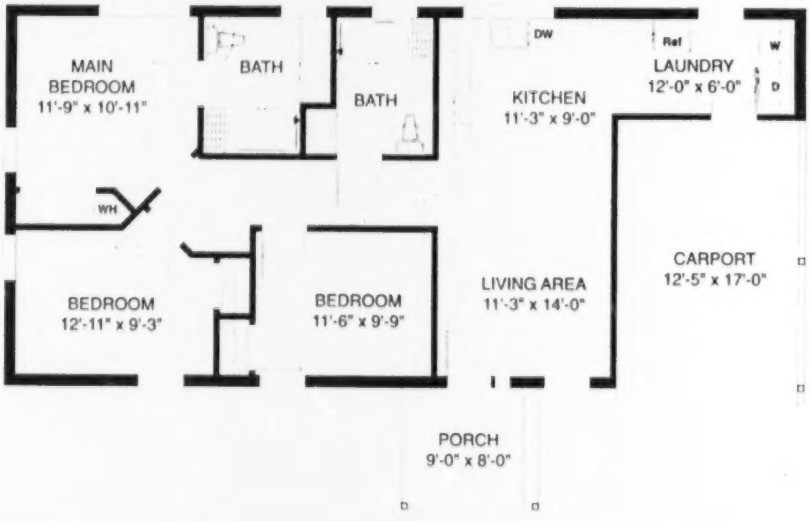

The Center for Accessible Housing receives more requests for accessible house plans than any other kind of information. In response, the Center has revised six stock house plans to incorporate universal design principles that make the homes fully accessible by people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices, and more livable for everyone.

A free catalog of the plans, "Accessible Stock House Plans," is available from the Center for Accessible Housing (listed on this fact sheet under "Disability Resources"). The plans themselves are available for $20/copy/plan from: North Carolina Cooperative Extension Services, Housing and House Furnishings, Box 7605, Raleigh, NC 27696-7605. This floor plan and illustration of house #4A are from the catalog.

The HAMMER Project: A partnership that creates accessible housing

by Duane French, Director, Access Alaska and Bill Crandall, HAMMER Project Coordinator

The HAMMER Project provides affordable accessibility modifications to private homes through a unique partnership among the local carpenters' union, Access Alaska, Easter Seals, and private businesses.

Prior to HAMMER, people in Fairbanks who needed access modifications to their homes were on their own. Many couldn't afford the modifications they needed, and were, in effect, trapped in their homes. Others were not able to live independently because they couldn't find accessible housing.

People with disabilities and their families called Access Alaska seeking funding to pay for the materials and labor to make needed home access modifications, but, while funding sources endorsed the proposals, they claimed the number of people who would benefit were too small to justify the amounts requested. So Access Alaska, seeking to free the folks who were trapped by a lack of accessible housing, met with the local carpenters' union manager. The manager felt that union carpenters who were out of work would be willing to volunteer their skills in return for higher placement on the waiting list for paying jobs.

Easter Seals provided a $2,000 grant to buy building materials and Access Alaska asked for--and received--discounts from local building materials suppliers to stretch the little money we had. This partnership of the not-for-profit sector, businesses, and union labor, enabled Access Alaska to begin remodeling existing homes.

HAMMER has not received more than $2,500 from any one source. People who request services are asked to contribute if possible, and donations solicited annually to buy materials.

The number of people HAMMER serves is limited by the availability of volunteer union carpenters. Alaska has a short building season, and carpenters are in high demand at the same time of year (summer) that Access Alaska receives the greatest number of access requests.

Since 1985, when the HAMMER project was conceived, Access Alaska and union carpenters have made accessibility modifications to more than 60 private homes. Typical projects include: building entrance ramps, widening doorways, adding grab bars, providing adaptive hardware (sinks, door handles), and remodeling kitchen areas for wheelchair-users.

As an unexpected fringe benefit of HAMMER, the project coordinator has become the community "expert" on accessibility, and can now provide technical assistance to individuals and businesses who request it.

The HAMMER project has provided modifications to help people with a variety of disabilities and of all ages. Our most requested service is providing physical access for people with mobility-related disabilities. The project is currently able to fill 60 to 70 percent of the 20 to 25 requests it receives annually for building modification.

For more information contact: **Access Alaska 3550 Airport Way, Suite 3 Fairbanks, AK 99709 (907) 479-7940.**

From the 1991 Common Threads Conference Proceedings.

ACRES

By Jack Mayhew

The only national conference devoted solely to issues and concerns of serving children and youth with disabilities in rural schools is scheduled for March 15-18, at the Tropicana Resort in Las Vegas. "Reaching to the Future: Boldly Facing Challenges in Rural Communities" is sponsored by the American Council on Rural Special Education (ACRES)

This fifteenth annual ACRES National Conference will offer presentations on collaborative education models, technology, multicultural education, preservice/inservice training, administration, parents and families, early childhood, transition, at-risk students, gifted and talented, transportation, health, related services, low-incidence disabilities, Native American issues and more.

Conference keynote speakers are Dr. Bruce Ramirez (Associate Executive Director of the Department of Professional Advancement for the Council for Exceptional Children), Dr. Martha Fields (executive director for the National Association of State Directors of Special Education) and educational consultant Michael Delaney.

The members of ACRES hope you will join the many rural educators, administrators, service providers, policymakers, parents and university students at this major national education event. For additional information please contact: **ACRES National Headquarters c/o Barbara McCreedy, 221 MBH, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112 (801) 581-5659.**

APRIL

by Linda Gonzales

1995 promises to be an exciting and productive year for APRIL. More than 70 independent living centers, associates and individuals are now APRIL members, no doubt encouraged to join by the great work we do in helping make independent living a reality for rural Americans with disabilities (or maybe it's our low dues!).

We're starting the year with the energy of new folks on our board--Doug Koehner, advocacy director at New Vista ILC, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Dawn Durbin, executive director of the Northwest Illinois CIL, Sterling, Ill.; Mary Holloway, executive director of the Resource CIL, Osage, Kansas; and Kay Raucher, executive director of RAIL in Kirkwood, Missouri. And we're following up on mandates from the 11 members and 10 future members (as we like to call our guests) who attended our annual meeting in Missoula, Montana last August: We're checking out the feasability of applying for a National Direct Americorps grant and we're also developing closer relationships with other national groups that work to increase the opportunities for independent living for people with disabilities, in particular, the National Council on Independent Living.

We're also pursuing the idea af holding a national conference on rural independent living. If you have ideas for workshop topics, conference location, or would like to present or attend, call Linda Gonzales at APRIL--we welcome your input. We'll also tell you how you can change your status from "future member" to "member in good standing." APRIL's phone number, voice and FAX, is 505-984-8035.

Housing info on tap at libraries

by Bonnie Williamson
Hill County (Montana) Librarian

You may believe housing problems are more difficult to solve in rural than in urban areas, but a quick survey of information available in our local rural public library has convinced me otherwise.

In small towns, the library is a useful resource that offers information not available elsewhere. Public libraries are usually conveniently located, accessible to people with disabilities, and staffed by folks who have a healthy service attitude.

Looking for a house to rent or buy? Local newspapers, telephone directories and several types of business directories are available at public libraries. Having a housing dispute with a landlord, tenant, or roommate? Information on housing laws, state legal codes and city ordinances is often found in public library reference collections, as are the easy-to-use landlord/tenant guides prepared by consumer advocacy groups in many communities. These helpful, authoritative commentaries explain the laws and give case studies as examples.

Looking for information on the community? Public libraries (and librarians) often have local resources that are not generally available. In many areas, public service organizations compile community resource directories that are available in libraries. These directories list the telephone numbers and addresses of the community's key people, government officials, service clubs, Alcoholics Annonymous, churches, medical centers, institutions, senior centers, schools, social services and more.

And if you're on a tight budget, public libraries have another advantage: most of their services are free.

An accessible ramp-building book

by Nick Baker

Many buildings would be reasonably accessible if it were possible to get past that first obstacle: the steps leading to the entrance. Here's a book that makes it possible for virtually anyone to build (or supervise the building of) ramps that can make the entrances or interior grade changes of many buildings accessible.

John Henson has written "Building a Ramp" so that no previous construction experience is necessary. The book moves step-by-step from design considerations, to site evaluation, to planning, to selecting and buying materials, and finally, to building the ramp. Important elements like railings, curbs and non-slip surfaces are detailed. Every step is carefully explained in plain language. When tools are to be used, Henson explains the proper way to use them. When a structural element is to be built, a clearly notated drawing shows the work to be done, the fasteners to be used and details of the construction.

In short, "Building a Ramp" is itself completely accessible, even for construction neophytes, and the book's 14-point, easy-to-read type and well-drawn, uncluttered line drawings ease reading for folks with visual impairments.

The 57-page book is free to individuals, but carries a $10 price tag for libraries and institutions. To order a copy, write to RIDAC Program Rehabilitation Services, 720 W. 3rd St., Little Rock, AR 72201. Or you can phone them at (501) 682- 6703.

Inside this issue...

- Starting with this issue of the Rural Exchange, we'll be including **Fact Sheets** featuring statistics, resources, maps, graphics or other information relevant to rural issues. This issue's fact sheets focus on **Rural Housing** and **Rural Demographics.**
- This issue's lead story tells how the manufactured housing industry and accesible housing advocates can work together to increase the supply of accessible rural homes.
- In another article, the director of an Alaska independent living center desribes a partnership among union capenters, businesses and nonprofit organizations that provides low- or no-cost modifications to improve rual housing accessibility.
- We review a book (it's a good one) that provides simple, straightforward instructions on building wooden ramps.
- And, as usual, there's news from the Rural Institute, APRIL, ACRES and more.

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